

MEMORANDUM

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Hart Research Associates
DATE: November 6, 2013
RE: Seattle Residents' Attitudes toward the Seattle Police Department

From October 7 to 13, 2013, Hart Research conducted a telephone survey among a representative sample of 753 Seattle residents (margin of error ± 3.6 percentage points). The sample was drawn in order to ensure that respondents were selected at random AND that the sample was representative of the city's population by age, race, and region. Hart Research Associates also made sure to include interviews among landline and cell phone respondents.

Before discussing specific survey results in more detail, following is a summary of key findings:

Summary of Findings

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Seattle residents approve of the job that the Seattle Police Department (SPD) is doing, with some but not excessive variation by race—72% of Hispanics, 68% of Asians, 65% of whites, and 61% of African Americans approve. In fact, these differences by race fall well within the margin of error for EACH subgroup. In addition, a near-unanimous 90% of respondents say they have a lot or some respect for Seattle police officers, while among the 44% minority of residents who report they had SOME contact with the SPD over the past year, nearly three-quarters (74%) were satisfied with their interaction.

Seattle residents have a more negative perception of the SPD (28% disapprove) than they do of the King County Sheriff's Office (8% disapprove) or the Washington State Patrol (7% disapprove). But this disparity is largely the result of residents reporting much HIGHER contact with the SPD than the two other agencies AND the SPD being viewed as by far the law enforcement agency MOST responsible for Seattle's safety and security. In other words, because the SPD is more visible and held more responsible than the other two law enforcement agencies, it is more likely to be graded more rigorously.

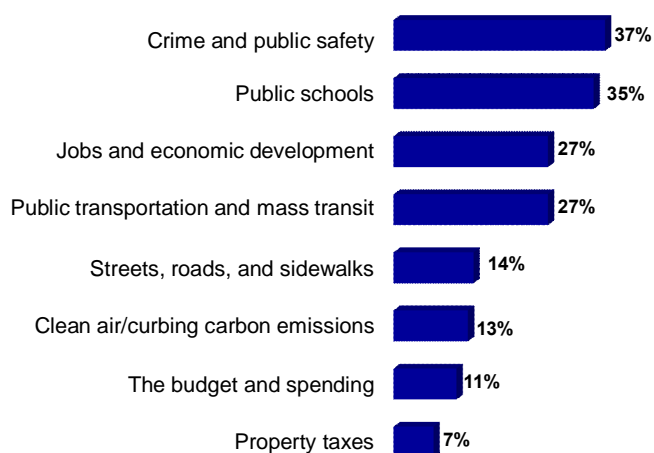
Of the minority of Seattle residents who report having had some contact with the SPD in the past year, most are satisfied with their experience, regard police officers favorably, and feel that they were treated with professionalism and respect. Even those who were stopped or detained by a police officer clearly understand why, and believe the stop was reasonable and that the officer handled the situation well.

In spite of the fact that most ACTUAL interactions between civilians and Seattle police over the past year are reported as being positive, negative IMPRESSIONS of Seattle police officers are evident in the survey. Many respondents identify racial profiling and the use of excessive force as problems with the SPD, with a plurality attributing their impressions to things they have heard, read, or seen (versus actually witnessed). One interesting survey result is that respondents who express MORE awareness of the Department of Justice report or the settlement agreement are also MORE likely to believe that Seattle police officers engage in practices of excessive force and in racial profiling. While we did not detect drastic variation by race—either in overall favorability of Seattle police officers or in the composition of who has been stopped or detained—it is worth noting that African Americans are more likely than other racial groups to believe that excessive force and racial bias are major problems with Seattle police.

I. GENERAL PERCEPTIONS OF THE SPD

To get a broad impression of the priority of crime and public safety to Seattle residents BEFORE we asked specific and narrow questions about the SPD, we started the survey by asking respondents to select the one or two issues most important to them personally. “Crime and public safety” is the number one most important issue to Seattle residents, with 37% citing it as a top concern, followed closely by public schools at 35%.

One of the Two Most Important Issues Facing Seattle, among All Residents

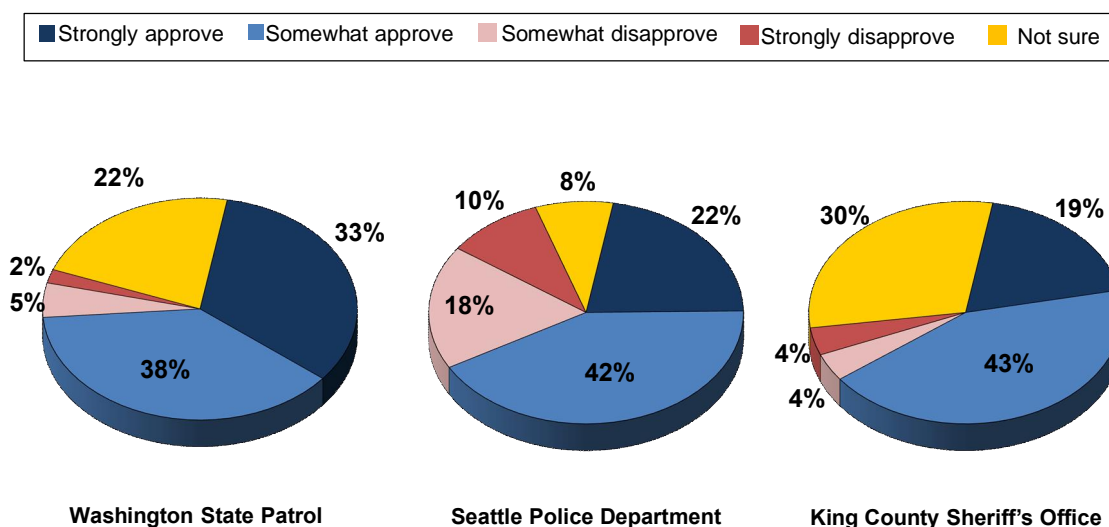


One of the Two Most Important Issues Facing Seattle, by Race

	Whites	African Americans	Hispanics	Asians
Crime and public safety	34%	44%	38%	43%
Public schools	36%	31%	44%	29%
Jobs and economic development	26%	21%	28%	32%
Public transportation and mass transit	31%	14%	24%	19%
Property taxes	6%	18%	8%	6%

Overall, the SPD is viewed favorably by the city's residents, with 64% approving of the job that the SPD is doing and 28% disapproving. The SPD's "job performance" is on par with the King County Sheriff's Office and lags slightly behind the State Patrol; and the SPD's "disapprove" is notably higher than its two law enforcement counterparts.

Approval of Law Enforcement Agencies



Impressions of the SPD are fairly "flat" by key subgroups. For example, 65% of men approve of the SPD compared with 64% of women; 62% of 18- to 34-year-olds approve compared with 65% of adults ages 65 and older; as we noted earlier, while there is some distinction by race, these differences are well within the margin of error for each subgroup. The East Precinct is where the SPD gets its lowest ratings (59% approve), with its performance meriting approval ratings of 65% and higher in the rest of the city.

A two-thirds (67%) majority of respondents say the *level of police protection* in their neighborhood has remained the same in the past two years (compared with 18% who say it increased, and 9% who say it decreased), and 58% say that the *situation with the SPD and policing practices* has stayed the same in the past year. One illuminating finding is that while 23% of respondents say police practices have gotten better over the past 12 months, just 6% say they have gotten worse.

A plurality also believe the *amount of crime* in their neighborhood has stayed the same in past two years: 48% say it has remained about the same, compared with 38% who say it has gone up—though only 10% say it has gone up by a lot. Most respondents *feel safe* in their neighborhood as well: 76% report feeling very or somewhat safe, while 23% report feeling very or somewhat unsafe.

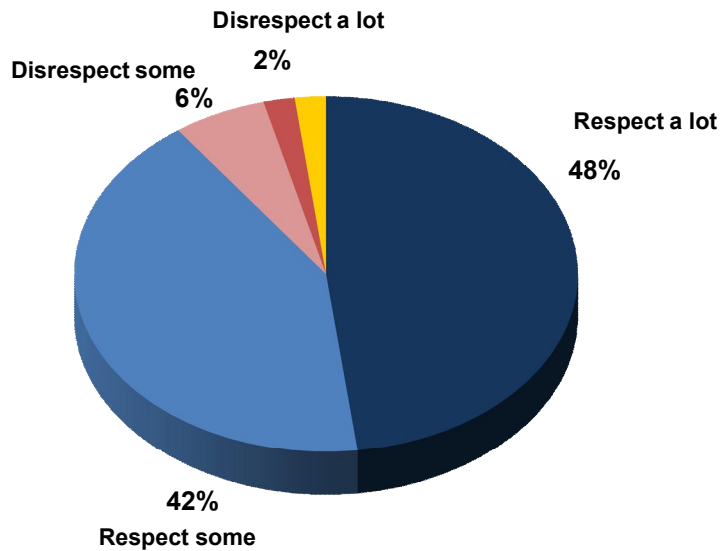
	ALL	East Precinct	North Precinct	South Precinct	South-west Precinct	West Precinct
Level of neighborhood crime						
Gone up	38%	39%	39%	37%	30%	38%
Gone down	9%	8%	9%	16%	9%	3%
Safety walking in neighborhood						
Safe	75%	74%	80%	62%	74%	74%
Unsafe	23%	25%	19%	38%	22%	24%
Level of police protection						
Increased	18%	23%	13%	18%	18%	15%
Decreased	9%	11%	11%	12%	9%	8%

Though only 44% of respondents say they have reported a suspicious incident, crime, or other emergency to the SPD in the past year—or have contacted it for other assistance—three-quarters (74%) report being satisfied with the experience. This group gives police officers especially high marks on professionalism and respect: 67% “strongly agree” that the officer treated them professionally and respectfully during the encounter.

Among respondents who say they have contacted or asked for assistance from a police officer at least once in the past year, 63% say they approve of the SPD—largely mirroring overall approval. Similarly, though only 9% of respondents report having been stopped or detained by a Seattle police officer in the past year, nearly two-thirds (64%) of this group report overall satisfaction with the experience as well.

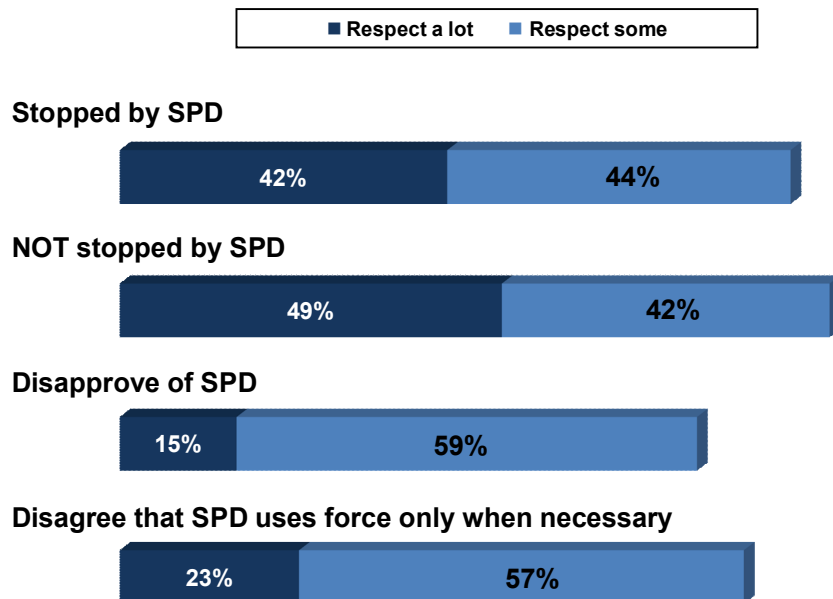
What’s more, when asked how much they *respect* Seattle police officers, an impressive 90% of residents say they respect them—with nearly half (48%) saying they respect the officers a lot.

Level of Respect for Seattle Police Officers



The SPD's "respect" ratings span an impressive gamut of subgroups, including those that seem on the surface to be hostile:

Level of Respect for Seattle Police Officers



II. FAMILIARITY WITH THE SPD COMPARED WITH OTHER LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

It is worth noting that the two other law enforcement agencies we tested have lower negative ratings than the SPD: while the SPD garners 28% disapproval, the Washington State Patrol has just a 7% disapprove (71% approve), and the King County Sheriff's Office has an 8% disapprove (62% approve). However, this is due largely to two key elements: lack of *familiarity* and lack of *contact* with the other two agencies.

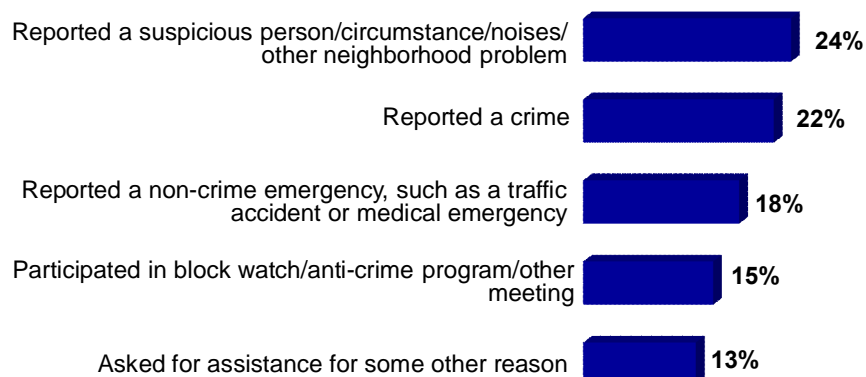
- **Lack of familiarity:** Nearly one in three respondents is unable to give an opinion on the King County Sheriff's Office, while nearly one in four is unable to rate the Washington State Patrol. By contrast, only 8% of respondents do not know enough to form an opinion of the SPD.
- **Lack of contact:** Though only about one in three (35%) respondents answered "yes" when asked whether they had contacted or asked for assistance from the SPD in the past year, only 8% had done so from the Washington State Patrol, and only 5% had done so from the Sheriff's Office. This lack of exposure may explain the inability of significant proportions of Seattle residents to form a real opinion of these agencies.
- **Responsibility:** A large 80% majority say the SPD has "a lot of responsibility for the safety and security of your neighborhood," compared with only 12% who say the same for King County Sheriff's Office, and 6% for Washington State Patrol.

In other words, the SPD's higher "disapprove" rating could be a function of its significantly higher crime-fighting presence in Seattle than the Sheriff's Office and the State Patrol, and of the fact that crime and public safety is the TOP priority among Seattle residents.

III. THE IMPRESSIONS FORMED ABOUT THE SPD DO NOT NECESSARILY DERIVE FROM ACTUAL CONTACT

Though Seattle residents have had more contact with the police than they have had with the other two agencies we tested, it is worth emphasizing that only about a third (35%) report contacting or asking for assistance from the SPD in the past year; even when prompted further with a list of specific possible reasons for contact, only 44% indicate that they had contact involving reporting a suspicious incident, crime, or emergency, or asking for police assistance (additionally, 15% report having participated in some kind of block watch or anti-crime program). This suggests that a wide swath of residents' perceptions are based more on things they have heard, read, or seen than on actual recent contact with the police.

Yes, Have Done This One or More Times in the Past 12 Months, among All Residents



Among those who *have had* some contact with the SPD, reporting “a suspicious person, suspicious circumstance, suspicious noises, or other neighborhood problem” is the most common reason, with 24% of these respondents having done so in the past year, followed closely by reporting a crime, which 22% of these respondents say they have done.

Furthermore, only 6% of respondents report that they have been stopped or detained by the SPD in the past year. When prompted with a list of possible specific instances, 9% say they have been stopped while driving, while walking or standing in public, while at their home or place of work, or for some other reason. Among these, driving is the top circumstance during which respondents have been stopped—still, however, only 6% report having been stopped in their car.

Even when asked about *other* members of their household, only 19% say someone else in their household has had at least one good experience with a police officer in the past year—while only 6% say someone else in their household has had a *bad* one. These findings underscore not just how little actual contact residents have had with the police, but a) how little actual contact those closest to them have had, and b) how little *negative* contact residents report knowing about firsthand.

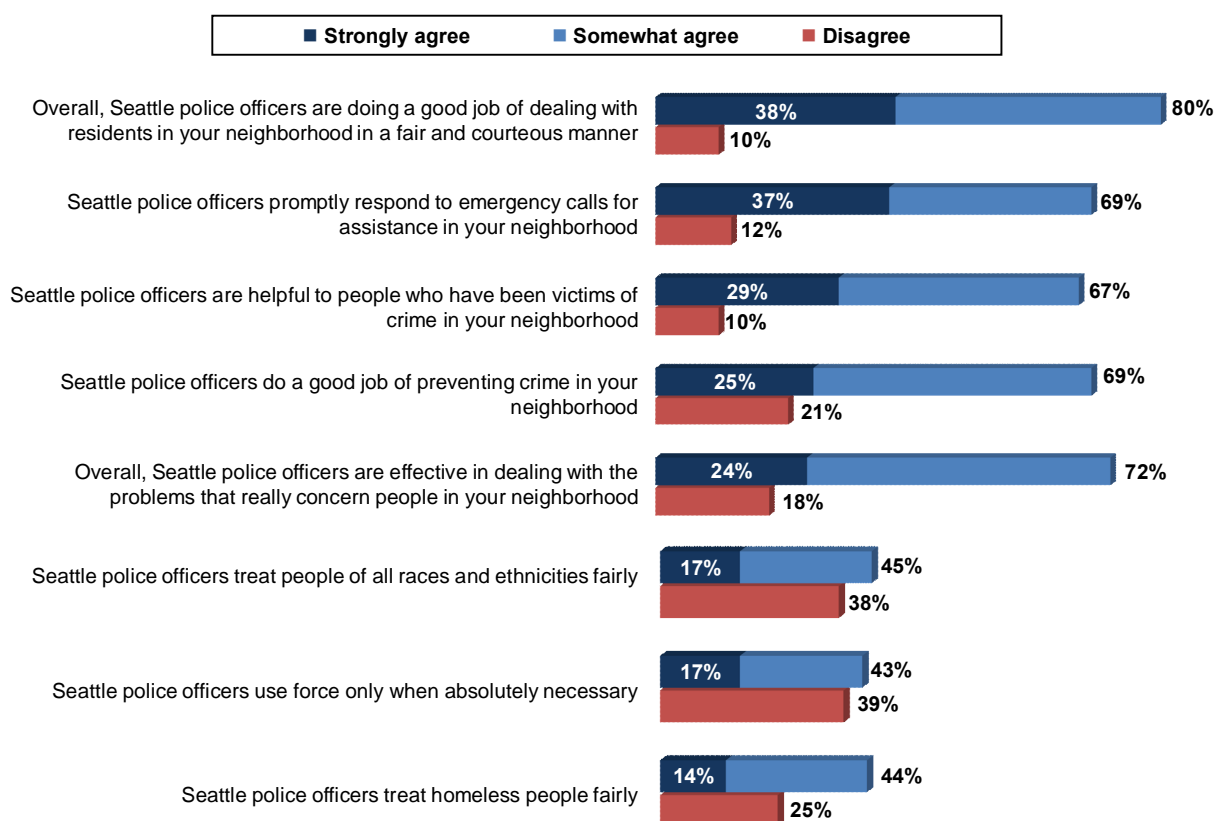
These findings suggest that respondents’ impressions of the SPD—including their OWN negative impressions—derive more from secondhand sources than from actual contact or even firsthand accounts. In fact, among those who identify at least one “major” or “minor” problem with the SPD from a list of four that we provided, one-third (33%) volunteer “based on what I’ve read/seen on TV/press/media coverage/papers” as their reason for saying so—the top reason given. By comparison, only 9% say their negative impressions of the SPD are based on

personal experience, and another 9% indicate that they actually have heard a personal account of a negative encounter.

IV. THE SPD RECEIVES STRONG POSITIVE RATINGS ON SELECTED TRAITS/ATTRIBUTES (EVEN AMONG THOSE WITH ACTUAL CONTACT WITH THE SPD); BUT SOME NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS PERSIST

The SPD attains high marks from residents on treating people fairly and courteously (80% agree), dealing with neighborhood problems (72% agree), being responsive to calls for assistance (69% agree), preventing neighborhood crime (69% agree), and being helpful to crime victims (67% agree).

ALL RESIDENTS



Proportion Who “Agree,” by Race

	ALL	Whites	AAs	Hispanics	Asians
Overall, Seattle police officers are doing a good job of dealing with residents in your neighborhood in a fair and courteous manner	80%	82%	72%	79%	77%
Seattle police officers promptly respond to emergency calls for assistance in your neighborhood	69%	69%	67%	61%	70%
Seattle police officers are helpful to people who have been victims of crime in your neighborhood	67%	69%	60%	64%	62%
Seattle police officers do a good job of preventing crime in your neighborhood	69%	69%	67%	66%	69%
Overall, Seattle police officers are effective in dealing with the problems that really concern people in your neighborhood	72%	72%	63%	80%	70%
Seattle police officers treat people of all races and ethnicities fairly	45%	45%	47%	44%	42%
Seattle police officers use force only when absolutely necessary	43%	45%	29%	46%	40%
Seattle police officers treat homeless people fairly	44%	45%	39%	54%	39%

However, the SPD’s ratings on more sensitive, hot-button issues are *not* as stellar: only 45% agree with the statement that “Seattle police officers treat people of all races and ethnicities fairly,” compared with 38% who disagree. Again, as we have found throughout this survey, there is surprisingly little variation by race on most questions, including this item (Hispanics: 44% agree, 41% disagree; Asians: 42% agree, 37% disagree; whites: 45% agree, 37% disagree; African Americans: 47% agree, 45% disagree). In fact, there is MORE variation by such factors as gender or awareness of the DOJ report and settlement agreement than there is by race.

Furthermore, 43% agree that “Seattle police officers use force only when absolutely necessary,” compared with 39% who disagree. And only 44% agree that “Seattle police officers treat homeless people fairly,” while 28% disagree.

In accordance with these findings, 68% say that “Seattle police using excessive force, for example, being physically abusive” is a problem (36% “major” problem), and 66% say that “Seattle Police engaging in racial profiling” is a problem (32% “major” problem). By contrast, only 16% say that police officers “stopping people in cars or on the street without good reason” is a major problem, and only 16% say the same about “Seattle Police using offensive language.”

There are a few plausible explanations for why these negative aspects of police officers’ performance have stuck with city residents. For instance, while 77% of residents report being aware of the 2011 Department of Justice report—which

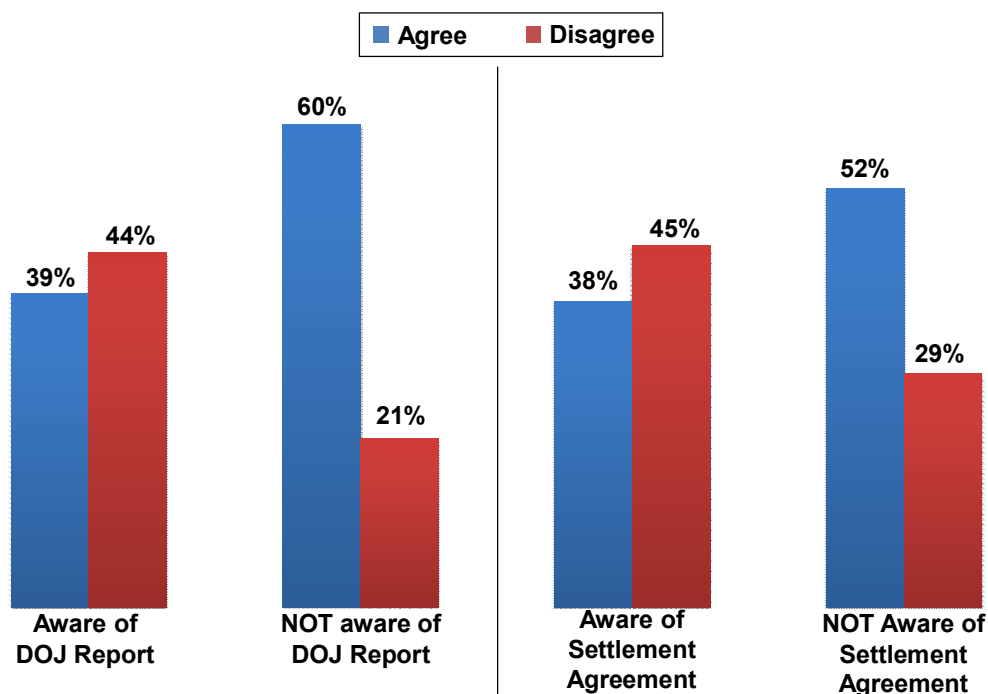
contended that the SPD has engaged in patterns of excessive force—and 63% know about the settlement agreement, only 47% know about the monitor who has been appointed to oversee reform, and only 40% know about the Community Police Commission created to implement reform. So, people are more aware of the *problems* the SPD has encountered than they are of the *solutions* to these problems; it is therefore not altogether surprising that these problems are salient in residents' minds.

To bolster this point, it is helpful to look at other findings through the lens of those who are aware of the DOJ report:

Excessive force: Among respondents who know about the 2011 report, 44% disagree with the statement that “Seattle police officers use force only when absolutely necessary,” while 39% agree—but among those who are *not* aware of the DOJ’s findings, 60% agree with this positive assessment, and only 21% disagree.

Similarly, of those who know about the settlement agreement, 45% disagree with the statement that “Seattle police officers use force only when absolutely necessary,” and 38% agree, but among those who are not aware of the settlement agreement, 52% agree and only 29% disagree.

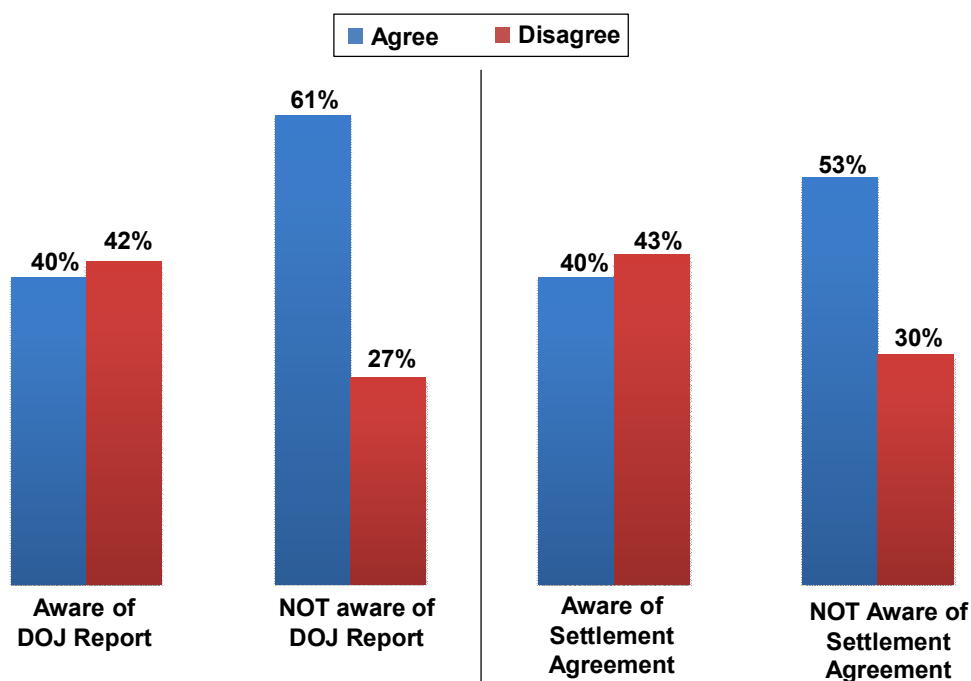
Seattle Police Officers Use Force Only When Absolutely Necessary



Racial profiling: Among respondents who know about the 2011 DOJ report, 42% disagree with the statement that “Seattle police officers treat people of all races and ethnicities fairly,” while 40% agree—but among those who are *not* aware of the DOJ’s findings, 61% agree, and only 27% disagree.

Similarly, of those who know about the settlement agreement, 43% disagree with the statement that “Seattle police officers treat people of all races and ethnicities fairly,” and 40% agree—but among those who are not aware of the settlement agreement, 53% agree and only 30% disagree.

Seattle Police Officers Treat People of All Races and Ethnicities Fairly



V. THE BROAD IMAGE OF THE SPD DOES NOT VARY DRAMATICALLY BETWEEN RACES, BUT RACIAL DIFFERENCES EXIST ON MORE SPECIFIC METRICS

We reported earlier the relatively “flat” rating of the SPD on the core approve/disapprove measurement by race. Similarly, the level of respect for the Seattle police is high across the board: Hispanics (64% respect a lot, 28% respect some), Asians (44% respect a lot, 50% respect some), whites (47% respect a lot, 42% respect some), and African Americans (50% respect a lot, 42% respect some).

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African Americans and Hispanics are not significantly more likely to report that someone in their household has had a bad experience with a Seattle police officer, and not significantly less likely to report that someone has had a *good* experience.

Proportion Who Say “Yes,” by Race

	ALL	Whites	African Americans	Hispanics	Asians
Someone in household has had a GOOD experience with a Seattle police officer in past year	19%	18%	12%	16%	20%
Someone in household has had a BAD experience with a Seattle police officer in past year	6%	5%	8%	5%	5%

However, on other metrics racial differences are more pronounced:

Excessive Force: Overall, just 39% disagree with the statement that “Seattle police officers use force only when absolutely necessary.” But, while whites agree with this statement by 45% to 39%, African Americans disagree by 59% to 29%. There is regional variation here as well, with those in the East Precinct disagreeing by 10 percentage points (47% to 37%).

Interestingly, among those who actually have been stopped by the police (albeit, only 69 respondents), 50% agree with this statement, while just 38% disagree—again highlighting that most contact with the police was relatively positive, and that negative perceptions likely are gained through the media or secondhand discussions rather than personal interaction.

Overall, 36% of respondents think that the “Seattle Police using excessive force” is a **“major problem.”** This view is held both by those who have had contact with the SPD, and those who have not had contact with the SPD (36% of both groups say this is a “major problem”). However, 55% of African Americans say this is a “major problem,” representing another racial disparity.

Racial Profiling: A little less than two in five (38%) respondents disagree with the statement that “Seattle police officers treat people of all races and ethnicities fairly,” compared with 45% who agree. Importantly, there are NO pronounced racial differences here: Hispanics AGREE with this statement (i.e., the SPD treat people of all races/ethnicities fairly) by 44% to 41%, whites by 45% to 37%, Asians by 42% to 37%, and African Americans by 47% to 45%. The same regional variation showed up here as on the “excessive force” measure, with those in the

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East Precinct disagreeing by 48% to 36%; those in the Southwest Precinct, for example, agree by a margin of nearly 20 percentage points (54% to 37%).

While our findings do not differ widely on this measure based on who has or has not had *contact* with the police, it is worth noting that the 9% of respondents who have been *stopped or detained* disagree with this statement by 44% to 53%.

Finally, 32% of respondents believe that “Seattle police engaging in racial profiling” is a **“major problem.”** However, 53% of African Americans believe this, which is significantly higher than for other ethnicities (Hispanics 44%, Asians 31%, whites 28%).

VI. OTHER NOTABLE FINDINGS WITH RESPECT TO RESIDENTS’ INTERACTION WITH THE SPD

Among those who have had contact with the SPD in the past year, which is 332 total respondents...

- 74% report being satisfied with their experience, including 38% who were “very satisfied.”
- 84% agree (67% strongly) that the officer treated them “professionally and respectfully.”
- 72% agree (51% strongly) that “the police promptly responded to your situation.”
- The lowest marks from this group are on being kept informed of the status of the case: only 35% agree that they were kept informed, compared with 48% who disagree.
- [The actual number of respondents is small enough that any subgroup breakdowns, such as race/ethnicity, would be so small as to be rendered meaningless.]

Among those who have been stopped or detained by a Seattle police officer in the past year, which is 69 respondents...

- The SPD has a 55% approval rating, and 86% respect the SPD a lot/some.
- We measured mostly satisfaction, not anger or resentment, with the SPD’s handling of the interaction: 64% say they were satisfied (34% very satisfied) with how the police officer handled the situation.
- A large 81% majority agree (71% strongly) that “the officer clearly explained the reason you were stopped or detained.”
- 79% agree (57% strongly) that “the officer treated you professionally and respectfully.”

- 76% agree (63% strongly) that “the amount of time you were detained during this encounter was reasonable.”
- And 70% even agree that “the officer had a valid reason for stopping or detaining you” (53% strongly).
- Only 7% of those who have been stopped were frisked, searched, or patted down, and only 4% say the officer used physical force.
- Roughly one in five (19%) of those that have been stopped say they were stopped or treated unfairly due to their race or background—though, notably, there is nothing particularly illuminating about the racial composition of this small group.
- [As with the respondents who have had contact with the SPD, the actual number of respondents is small enough that any subgroup breakdowns, such as race/ethnicity, would be so small as to be rendered meaningless.]

Who are they?

We took a look at who makes up the 9% of respondents that reported having been stopped or detained, and found that they are disproportionately low-income (41% earn under \$50K a year, while 25% make between \$50-100K and 22% make more than \$100K), but we found no real differences in education level. There are no major racial differences, although Hispanics are *slightly* overrepresented (among those who have been stopped, 12% are Hispanic, while among those who have not been stopped, 5% are Hispanic). Finally, 59% of those who have been stopped are male—compared with 50% of the total sample, and 50% of those who have not been stopped.